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A Labor Party

David P. Berenberg

I.

SUPPORT of a Labor Party is implicit in a Marxian position. The slogan "Workers of the world, unite," is not qualified. It does not mean "Workers of the world, unite in a simon-pure Marxian organization." It does not mean "Unite only on a program acceptable to the most advanced section of the proletariat." It means precisely what it says: "Workers of the world, unite."

Even if Marx had not left us the specific direction to unite, we would still be under compulsion to enter into a *genuine* Labor Party, if and when one is formed. Socialism has no meaning except in so far as it affects the release of labor from exploitation. This release cannot be brought about from above as the act of benevolent liberators. Only labor itself, fully aware of its present position in society, and fully ready to take over control of industry and government, can bring about its liberation.

The socialist movement has not by any means insisted in the past that labor accept its philosophy and its program *in toto* as the condition upon which it would consent to co-operate in the formation of a Labor Party. It has given assistance to admittedly immature efforts on the part of labor to organize for industrial and political action. The First International included, in addition to the socialists who were its sponsors, anarchists, nationalists and pure and simple trade unionists. Marx supported the German Social Democratic Party, much as he criticized its programs, and founded though it was on the politically immature Lasallean trade unions. The Independent Labor Party in Great Britain for years was part of the British Labor Party, although it recognized the politically backward nature of that organization.

The alternatives to participation in a *bona fide* Labor Party, no matter how immature its program, are either sectarianism, or a frank rejection of political action. Sectarianism may be very comforting to those who find greater satisfaction in being right than in being effective. No philosophy that attempts to become the basis for action has failed to develop its dogmatists and its heresy-hunters who shrink from the inevitable compromises with human frailty that mass-action involves. Sterile logicians seldom bring about historic changes. The coming social revolution will sweep them aside no matter how correctly they may reason from *a* to *b* in their esoteric journals.

The Blanquists, the anarchists, the syndicalists—all those who, in theory, reject political action, will find, as they have always found in the past, that they must convert the masses of the workers to their program and to their tactics. They may reject the concept of a Labor Party for the concept of a labor army, only to find themselves under the necessity of making the same concessions, the same programmatic changes for the sake of winning and keeping the support

of certain less advanced sections of the workers, for which they roundly curse the "labor politicians".

II.

If the argument developed above is sound, does it follow that the Socialist Party is for a Labor Party under any and all circumstances? That, of course, is the practical question that confronts us now.

The Communist Party has made a major issue of the immediate formation of a Labor Party. It has virtually shelved all other forms of activity, except its agitation for the united front, with which its drive for a Labor Party is closely involved. Its argument seems to run about as follows:

1) War and fascism are imminent realities, and constitute the chief problem now facing the working class.
2) War against the Soviet Union, inaugurated by Germany, Japan or both, is an early probability.
3) The only way to ward off war and fascism; the only way to secure either the benevolent neutrality or the active help of the United States for the Soviet Union is to gain political *influence,* if not power, as rapidly as possible.
4) It is obvious that both the Communist Party and the Socialist Party alone or even working together cannot quickly enough overcome the weight of prejudice against them to be reasonably effective in accomplishing these aims.
5) The solution of the problem lies in the immediate formation of a Farmer Labor Party.
6) The Roosevelt debacle, and the present plight of the farmers and workers furnishes enough domestic ground for the realization of the Farmer Labor Party slogan.
7) The program of this party need contain no proposals more radical than the defense of those liberties that we now have: the right to organize, to strike, to picket, civil liberties, "bourgeois" democracy, defense of the Soviet Union; the usual program of immediate demands.
8) The Farmer Labor Party so constituted is then to spread to include the poorer, and therefore presumably more "democratic" sections of the middle class in a so-called *People's Front,* along the lines laid down by Dimitroff in his speech at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International last August. The People's Front is to be the ultimate bulwark in the defense of "democratic government against fascism."

In line with this argument the Communist Party is now busily at work stimulating the formation of "Labor Parties" and of "Farmer Labor Parties" wherever it can awaken a response to its urgings. In this activity it is apparently willing to work with all groups that will accept its leadership, or failing that, its co-operation.

The question inevitably arises whether war and fascism can be averted by the formation of an amorphous "Labor Party", composed of a thousand disparate elements pulling in as many different directions? Does not the concept of the People's Front border on class collaboration? Can a party so inclusive as the People's Front do anything effective in realizing even a mild program of reforms? Or will it not bog down under the weight of its own contradictions? Does not the present position of the

Communist Party on the question of the Labor Party constitute a surrender of all revolutionary realism, and does it not commit the Communist Party to the same sterile reformism for which it has, justly, condemned the German Social Democracy? Is not a good offense the best defense in the class struggle? Is not the position of the Communist Party, in putting the emphasis on the *defense* of civil liberties and of democracy defeatist?

III.

In contra-distinction to the somewhat frantic eagerness exhibited by the Communist Party in the formation of a Labor Party, the Socialist Party is moved to make haste slowly. Its position is determined by a somewhat different set of considerations.

1) A Labor Party that is not to be simply the Communist Party or the Socialist Party under a new name must be based on major sections of organized labor. It must include, at the least, such substantial groups as the miners, the railway workers, the garment workers, the textile unions and the like.
2) A Farmer Labor Party must have a base in the substantial organizations of the working farmers.
3) The Farmer Labor Party, when formed, must make a clean break with all parties representing either capitalist or petty-bourgeois interests. Parties like the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, that still endorse, or play with the idea of endorsing Democratic or Republican candidates are immature. Marxian groups cannot co-operate with them.
4) While stimulation from the left plays an important role in the development of independent labor political action the determining impulse toward the formation of a Farmer Labor Party must come from within the ranks of the farmer and labor groups themselves. They must be genuinely aroused either in defense of rights that they clearly see to be threatened, or (less likely development) they must be genuinely interested in advancing to a new position in the class struggle. It is not enough to argue that the rights of the farmers and the workers are in fact threatened, and that these groups *ought* to be aroused. Unless they *are* deeply moved, all the beating of the tom-tom remains merely a noisy demonstration.
5) So long as labor and the farmers continue to believe that a "friend of the people" (for example, Franklin D. Roosevelt) can help them solve their political and economic problems, it is not possible to speak of a labor party. So far as the evidence goes, faith in F.D.R. has not been shaken. Should F.D.R. topple from public favor, he will immediately be succeeded by a charlatan of the type of Townsend or Coughlin.
6) No labor party can be based on the needs of the middle class. If sections of the middle class are willing to cast in their lot with labor, they must do so on the basis of labor's program.

IV.

The Farmer Labor party is not only desirable. It is necessary. It is inevitable. As the breakdown of the capitalist system proceeds it will become evident to ever-increasing circles of workers and

farmers that the political brokers of the old parties, who pretend to represent "all the people" cannot fulfill their promises. They will discover that the miracle workers, to whom they now give their faith and their support, have been betraying them. The illusion that Roosevelt is the champion of the forgotten man will perish in the years between 1937 and 1941, if the president is reelected to a second term. If he is defeated by a candidate sponsored by the Liberty League, the reactionary measures of his successor will serve to keep the Roosevelt myth alive a little longer.

Faith in the nostrum vendors, in Townsend, in Social Credit, in the inflationists, in Free Silverites, in Coughlin, in Utopia, Inc., and the like, will take longer in dying. To destroy that faith by frontal attack, by systematic exposures, by ridicule, by education in the principles of Marxism, will continue to be the chief function of the socialist movement in the immediate future.

The Farmer Labor Party will come into being when faith in Roosevelt wanes, provided no other demagogue of his type captures the imagination of the masses. It will come into being, not because the Seventh Congress of the Communist International willed it, but because the logic of events will demand its formation. It will come when labor is finally convinced that it must choose between independent political action, or the certain and complete destruction of its organizations. Not even its present conservative leadership is so masochistic as to prefer destruction.

The Labor Party that will arise when the time is ripe will probably not have a Marxist program. Its platform will be reformist. It will be an immature document assuming the indefinite continuation of the capitalist system. It may be nationalist, instead of internationalist in its nature. At best it will pay lip-service to the "ideal" of "production for use instead of for profit."

The Labor Party, when it comes into being, will include questionable elements. There will be in it careerists, band-wagon climbers, disgruntled office-seekers, money theorists and sincere visionaries. It will be led, unless the whole scene changes more rapidly than I think it will, by much the same men that lead the labor unions now—by the Lewises, the Hillmans, the Gormans, the Hutchinsons, even the Berrys. And it will be no more revolutionary, not even more progressive, than the organizations that these men lead in the industrial conflict.

The Labor Party, formed under the pressure of inexorable historic forces, will not refuse to accept the co-operatoin of Marxist elements. It will be the function of the Socialist Party to give to the Labor Party its experience and as much of its wisdom as the new organization will be able to accept. Nothing can be more disastrous, when a *bona fide* Labor Party actually comes into being, than to stand aloof, and to assume a holier than thou position. But it will be the duty of the party to retain its organization, to have its own platform, its own literature, and its own political activities. Only by retaining its separate organization, affiliated with the Labor Party, but not absorbed into it, can the Socialist Party fulfill *its* historic role.

That role is to force the Labor Party steadily leftward; to point out, from within, and as friendly critic, the weakness of anything but a straightforward revolutionary position; to draw the lessons of Labor Party victory and defeats; to crystallize its experiences.

Premature launching of a Labor Par-

ty, or of a Farmer Labor Party *without the participation of either labor or the farmers* will only serve to bring the Socialist Party into disrepute. The Socialist Party should not take part in any such adventure. The forces that are at work within the American Federation of Labor, and that are pushing that organization in the direction of independent political action are many and powerful. At the last convention of the American Federation of Labor a Labor Party resolution failed of passing by a narrow margin. Such a defeat is a victory. The growth of industrial union sentiment goes hand in hand with Labor Party sentiment.

Socialists everywhere do their part in stimulating this sentiment in the unions to which they belong, in central labor bodies, in their journals and in their agitational work. Such persistent work will in the end be far more effective than sporadic efforts to form a labor party here, and one there, that vanishes after a single election campaign.

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Notes on the United Front Problem

by Haim Kantorovitch

AFTER being defeated at a national convention, by a party referendum, at the N. E. C. meetings and now in the New York primaries, Louis Waldman, spokesman for the Old Guard in the Socialist Party, laid down in the capitalist press, of course, conditions under which he would be willing to "make peace". It never occurred to people like Waldman that he and his followers could remain in the Socialist Party and use all the legal and ethical party channels to persuade the majority of the party members that after all the Old Guard was right. Instead of persuading the majority, the Waldmans, Oneals and Cahans, leave the party, fight it openly in the primaries, and when defeated, lay down conditions of peace. If the majority of the party will bow its head in penitence, and accept Louis Waldman's "peace conditions" he and his friends will rejoin the party, and be willing to rule it.

What are Waldman's conditions? That the party reject communism and promise (that is, the party should promise Waldman) that under no circumstances will it enter a united front, or participate in common action with communists. No socialist takes these terms seriously. Even right wing socialists know that when Waldman "demands" that the party "reject communism" he only means to convey to the capitalist press the idea that the Socialist Party is really a communist party in disguise. Even his meager knowledge of socialism and communism makes it impossible to believe that he really thinks that the Socialist Party has become communistic. It is simply a matter of using the red scare method in his fight for leadership in the Socialist Party.

Waldman, and the old guard press in general, consciously confuse two different things that have really nothing in common: United front and participation of socialists in common action in which communists also participate. Here the two extremes meet. The communist press does the same thing. Even such an innocent thing as the debate between Thomas and Browder was declared a united front by both Old Guard and communists. The motives behind this deliberate confusion are of course different. The communists do it because they must convince the faithful that reality always follows the resolutions of the Comintern. All these exaggerated and false reports about the success of the united front that fill the columns of the *Daily Worker* are the "evidence" fed to the faithful to show how successful the new line is. The motives of the Old Guard are of course different. They proclaim every participation of socialists in common action a united front, hoping thereby to justify their absurd accusation, which they know to be absurd, that the militants are simply "agents of Stalin" in a socialist disguise.

And yet, these two things, common action and united front have nothing in common. When the Socialist Party par-

ticipates in common action with communists, it is common action not of these two particular parties. These two are parts of a much larger body. In such common action no agreement is made between the two parties, no compromises and no pledges are given. Both parties come, and may leave, as free agents, bound only by their own programs and principles, and guided by their beliefs as to what is harmful or beneficial to the class struggle. There can be no justification, for instance, for a socialist local to refuse to participate with other labor or radical organizations in a united May First celebration, or Scottsboro defense, or any strike or relief action, simply because communists also participate in the same actions. The Old Guard socialists refuse to participate in such common action, because they aim to drive out the communists from the labor movement. They refuse to recognize them as part of the movement. They have simply taken as their guide the old, discarded communist theory of social fascism. According to this theory the chief enemy of socialism was neither capitalism nor fascism, it was social democracy and the socialist movement generally. The fight against capitalism and fascism is important indeed, but it will have to wait. First comes the fight against the "chief enemy", the socialist movement. When we are done with this "main bulwark of capitalism" we will turn our weapons against capitalism and fascism. The history of the communist movement is a history not of fighting capitalism, but socialism. We will not here mention the means used in this fight. The Old Guard in the Socialist Party are novices by comparison with the communist saints.

The communists have discarded this theory. Have they given it up? We are not so certain that they have. There is enough evidence to make us believe that the "new line" is only a temporary expedient. No one knows or can foretell when a return to the old line may be "necessary because conditions have changed". "Conditions" usually change for communists in accordance with their resolutions. In the communist universe resolutions do not reflect reality. Reality is supposed to follow resolutions.

Meanwhile, while the communists have at least for a time given up the theory of social fascism, the Old Guard has taken it up. The name is not there, but the essence is. The Old Guard also maintains that the fight against capitalism, against war and fascism is important indeed, but not as important as the fight against communism. Capitalism and war will have to wait. When we have finished with the chief enemy, the communist movement, we'll turn our attention to capitalism. Naturally, those who believe that communism is the chief enemy, that the fight against communism must take precedent over everything else, cannot for a moment admit that they can have anything in common with, much less participate in, any common action with communists.

This is a point of view that cannot of course be accepted by a revolutionary socialist. Communism is, for the revolutionary socialist, not the chief enemy. It is part of the revolutionary movement of the working class. Communism represents a theory, a point of view, which the revolutionary socialist believes to be wrong. The road proposed by communists does not, in the opinion of the revolutionary socialist, lead to socialism but away from it. It is the duty of the revolutionary socialist to use every opportunity to explain to the working class that the communist way is wrong, that

it does not lead to socialism, but it is not the duty of revolutionary socialists to drive the communists out of the labor movement. They cannot be driven out because they are part of it. The communists are not the only tendency in the labor movement with which socialists disagree on theory and tactics. There are, and there will always be various tendencies within the labor movement in disagreement with each other. The ideal of one class, one party, (and a monolithic party at that) can only be achieved under a police-dictatorship.

The communists, however, are not content with such common action. They insist on nothing else than a formal, permanent united front agreement between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. The *Daily Worker* has even threatened that if the socialists will not listen to reason, the communists will again resort to the infamous tactics of the united front from below. Why are they so insistent on such a formal united front? What do they hope to gain by it? Before the "new line" was adopted the communists made no secret about it. Openly and frankly they proclaimed in their press, pamphlets, and official resolutions that the united front was a manoeuvre to disrupt the socialist movement. Now, since the new line has been adopted, they continually protest that "this time we mean it seriously". May be they do, but they have cried, "wolf, wolf," so often that we are justified in having some suspicions as to whether "this time" they really do mean it seriously and honestly.

A united front, that is a permanent and national agreement between the Socialist Party and Communist Party, would mean compromises and sacrifices on the part of both parties. The differences between socialism and communism are fundamental and deep-rooted. In order to arrive at an agreement both parties would have to make some sacrifices and some compromises. A situation may, of course, arise when such sacrifices and compromises may become necessary, when the advantages of united action are so great and so important that no price would be too great for its achievement. But such a situation does not now exist in the U. S.

"The question of the united front" rightly declares the resolution adopted at the recently held *Socialist Call* conference, "is not one that involves socialists and communists exclusively. The united front is, first of all, an effort to involve great masses in a common action." Experience in the labor movement has shown, however, that the mere participation of communists in any action is the greatest obstacle to any united common action. The *Daily Worker* may not like it, but it is nevertheless true: communists are disliked and distrusted in the labor movement. They are disliked and distrusted not because of what the Hearst press says either about them, or about Soviet Russia, but of what they have done to the labor movement. A party cannot for more than fifteen years conduct a war of extermination against the entire labor movement, specializing in character assassination, disrupting everything, breaking up what they could, organizing dual unions and splitting the ranks of the workers, even at times when they were involved in bitter struggles against their bosses, and then suddenly come out and say: Well, that's over, we won't do it again! Not because we are wrong, not because we have changed our program, but just so. We won't do it again. Henceforth we will be good!

It will take more than a declaration

for the communists to regain the confidence of the labor and socialist movement. It will take years of actual experience, years of service to the labor movement, before the distrust and hatred of communism will disappear (i.e. if the new line will continue that long). At present it is the most serious obstacle in the way of the united front.

In concluding a united front with the Communist Party, a united front which can serve no useful purpose at present, the Socialist Party would take responsibility for whatever the Communist Party did. Of course the two parties would remain separate and independent. The agreement would say so expressly. But in the eyes of the masses the united front would be the "communist-socialist combination", not the socialist - communist. The reactionary press, the Old Guard and the communists would see to that.

No matter how hard it would be to take the responsibility for the communist past, it is even harder for Marxian socialists to take any, even the smallest part of, responsibility for the present opportunist, adventuristic policy of the Communist Party. Its present attitude to war and the League of Nations, and its class-collaboration policy, (rather a caricature of class-collaboration) must be fought by every Marxist. There is little space for many illustrations. One will have to suffice. But this one is enough to illustrate the present communist tactics of united front. Norman Thomas writes from California in the *Socialist Call* (April 18)

> Our comrades tell me that the Communist Party in California which has a record of real activity in the labor field has gone opportunist with a vengeance. In the name of a farmer-labor ticket the communists are making a hodge-podge platform of planks agreeable to everyone from Townsendites to Epics (each group presenting its favorite) and then they are asking all candidates on any ticket: "Do you accept these planks?" Those who do are the farmer-labor ticket! That's class collaboration on the worst scale I've heard of from any supposedly Marxist party.

If space permitted we could illustrate this by a dozen similar reports. Can socialists assume such responsibility and still persist in calling themselves Marxist-socialists?

The Socialist Party would also have to pay for the United Front with its right and its duty to oppose or criticize anything that takes place in Soviet Russia. Again, communists and many naive *Nation* and *New Republic* fed socialists will protest. Communists do not oppose criticism of Soviet Russia or Stalinism. They only demand that it be criticism and not slander. But, what does "slander" mean for the communists? This! The *Daily Worker* of April 16 finds that Normas Thomas "rehashes again stale slanders against the Soviet Union, slanders usually brought forward by certain well known types of reformists who try to cover up their opportunism with left phrases. . . . " Now, if the really friendly and always carefully expressed remarks of Thomas about the Soviet Union is slander, what then is friendly criticism?

But there is a better illustration of what friendly criticism of the Soviet Union and of Stalinism means to the communists. It is the case of Otto Bauer. Otto Bauer has been one of the staunchest fighters for the united front within the Socialist International. As a result he gained favor in the eyes of the communist leaders, so much so, that the *Daily Worker* even proclaimed in a shrieking headline that "Otto Bauer points way to working class unity against war." All was well. The Amer-

ican Old Guard even proclaimed Bauer an agent of Stalin. And suddenly the Communist International declared a holy war against Bauer. What had happened?

Otto Bauer published a review of a book on Stalin. He did not praise this anti-Stalin book. He was very critical of the author of the book. However, among other things, he said a few uncomplimentary things about the person of Joseph Stalin, and repeated the well known fact that the history of the Russian revolution was being falsified under Stalin's influence, especially in order to erase the role of Trotsky. The leaders of the Communist International at once found that any one who insulted the "great leader of the world proletariat" was nothing but a Trotskyite. And Trotskyism is of course excluded from the united front. We will not repeat here all the vile and false things said in these "war articles" about Trotsky and Trotskyism. They are too ugly to be repeated, but a few direct quotations on what Otto Bauer, or any socialist may or may not say or write, will surely be of interest to our readers. Here are a few:

> "To entertain a positive "attitude" towards the Soviet Union, and at the same time to fight Stalin is sheer hypocrisy. Without the leadership by Stalin (not Lenin, H.K.) there would be no Soviet Union today. . ."
> "an attack on Stalin is an attack on the Soviet Union. . . ."

If this is what Stalin has done, the Communist International feels sure that "this road, (that is criticism of Stalin, H.K.) leads . . . to the camp of the enemies of the United Front." (Communist International February, 1936.)

In the January issue of the same journal this is explained in the following words:

> "any one who attacks the person of the great leader of the international and Soviet proletariat is serving the interests of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. (p. 31).

and again on page 52

> "For as far as we Bolsheviks are concerned Stalin, and the U.S.S.R. are indissolubly bound together."

There may be and there are differences of opinion among socialists about communism and the Soviet Union, but there hardly are any about Stalinism. Stalinism, for all but the faithful communist, is the perversion of communism. It is socialism degenerated, in spite of the great practical achievements of Soviet Russia, for which no Marxist will make any one individual responsible. But, as we see, the price of the united front is the worship of Stalin, the cessation of all socialist criticism of Stalinism.

A situation may arise in this country where the unity of the two parties will be so important that socialists may even find it necessary to sacrifice the principle of free socialist criticism in order to achieve the united front. Fortunately, no such situation exists now in America.

PRE-CONVENTION ISSUES

This issue and the next issue which will appear at the time of the National Convention of the Socialist Party, May 23, carry some important articles on issues which will most probably be considered at the Convention.

The Functions of the National Executive Committee

Albert Sprague Coolidge

THE writer was first called to serve upon the National Executive Committee during one of the major inner struggles through which the Socialist Party has passed. The ideas here set out have developed against the background of that struggle. It is not my intention to discuss the issues over which the controversy raged; I wish rather to focus attention upon certain problems which the mere existence of the controversy brought to the acute stage. In particular, I am paying no attention to the Party Constitution as it stands. That it is inadequate, vague, and sadly in need of careful overhauling will be admitted universally. If anything in what follows should prove unconstitutional, it is implied that the appropriate amendment should be worked out at the coming convention.

The present N. E. C. has devoted a great deal of time at its meetings to discussions of policy. Both it and the previous N. E. C. have rather distinguished themselves by the frequency with which their pronouncements have been reversed. This is all wrong. The primary duty of the N. E. C. is not to issue dicta on controversial theoretical questions, but to furnish vigorous and imaginative leadership in the prosecution of the party's practical work. Discussion and decision of matters of policy and general theory belong to the National Convention, or to a referendum, and should not be usurped by the N. E. C. This implies, of course, that the Convention must accept its responsibility to discuss and decide such questions as may arise. It must not fritter away its time on irrelevancies, leaving important decisions to the N. E. C. by default, and then criticize the latter for exceeding its proper jurisdiction. The convention has the duty to determine clearly the general party line, and the N. E.C. has the duty to accept the line so indicated and drive it forward wholeheartedly and aggressively. Even if the line has been determined by an exceedingly close vote (possibly a reversal of the sentiment previously prevailing), it must, when once adopted, receive the united and unwavering allegiance of the N. E. C., as indeed of the whole party, without, of course, prejudicing the right of individual members who may find themselves in disagreement to argue in favor of a reversal of policy.

At times, however, it is certain to happen that the N. E. C. will be faced with the necessity of reaching decisions on practical matters involving controversial questions of policy which have not been settled in Convention, and under circumstances which will not permit postponement until the next Convention can deal with them. When this happens, the party has a right to look to the N. E. C. to give a bold lead, rather than adopting a paralyzing attitude of watchful waiting out of fear of offending some section of party opinion, or, still worse,

frequently reversing its policy according to the point of view which happens to command a majority at any particular meeting. In accordance with a sound and accepted principle, no member of a committee should be expected to propose or support a policy which he believes wrong. If the members of the N. E. C. are really leaders, they must of course be allowed and expected to take the initiative in developing policy under such circumstances, each according to his own true judgment of what is best for the party interests.

Now, it is inconsistent with the ideal of democratic control of the party to permit the N. E. C. to adopt policies repugnant to majority party opinion, even between conventions. Yet, if the N. E. C. descends to that posture in which it is possible to keep the ear close to the ground, in order to sound out party opinion, and makes (or evades) decisions on the basis of guesses as to the relative popularity of the alternatives presented, it will immediately lose its position of leadership, and become an assembly of yes-men. How is this dilemma to be avoided? By seeing to it that the membership of the N. E. C. is chosen from among those who are clearly and wholeheartedly in sympathy with the general attitude of the party majority. With a committee so chosen, there is little danger of serious conflict between their leadership and the ruling party desire.

In this sense, the prevailing majority (supposing it to be a more or less definite group within the party) has clearly the right to expect the N. E. C. to carry out its wishes. What it has *not* the right to expect is that those of its members who are elevated to the N. E. C. will use their position to further their partisan advantage, by throwing official sanction behind their propaganda in preference to that of the minority groups, by deciding questions in the light of their probable effect upon coming elections of delegates or officials, or in any of the innumerable ways in which the "ins" can make it easier for themselves to stay in. It must be admitted that the distinction suggested here is a tenuous one, offering wide latitude for interpretation. Yet as a principle it is sound, and with sufficient good faith on all sides it should prove a satisfactory working guide.

It follows from the above that the N. E. C. should be substantially homogeneous, in order that it may be capable of quick, decisive, and consistent action. It is not the place for proportional representation, or any similar attempt to secure a balance of opinions. In policy-forming bodies such as conventions, it is very necessary to secure faithful numerical representation of all sides, in order that discussion may be manifold and that no section of the party may feel suppressed. But since the N. E. C. has as its prime function merely the carrying out of the decisions reached in convention, it should comprise a very substantial majority of representatives of the prevailing camp, with only enough in opposition to secure intelligent presentation of the opposing arguments as need may arise, without danger of interference with speedy and consistent action.

Perhaps the questions most urgently in need of clarification are those concerning the relations between the N.E.C. and the subordinate bodies. It seems clear enough that, so far as matters of general principle, policy, or tactics are involved, nothing short of national uniformity and disciplined control can be permitted. Intolerable confusion and impotence will be the certain result of a

State's Rights attitude such that to be a socialist means one thing in this state, another in that. We rightly believe in the enlargement of the powers of the Federal Government at the expense of the independence of the states, and we must apply the same principle to our own organization. The surrender of local independence will admittedly be a bitter pill to swallow; yet it is the price which has to be paid to secure a strong, united party able to deal with problems which are recognized as insoluble except by a nation-wide attack.

In its legislative capacity, which it derives from the national convention, the N. E. C. must be recognized as superior to all local bodies. But this does not apply to administrative or judicial functions. In the interest both of sheer mechanical efficiency and of the development of responsible local leadership it is necessary for state and local organizations to manage their own affairs, within the general pattern laid down by the national organization. Thus, for example, the N. E. C. may properly rule that a reasonable interpretation of the party line as determined in national convention requires that persons who advocate a certain policy be ineligible for membership. It should not, however, undertake or be asked to determine whether particular individuals fall under the ban, or to review decisions on such cases made by lower authorities. It might be requested to give an advisory opinion in cases where the application of the general rule was not clear. For the same reason, the N. E. C. does not properly discipline individual members or locals. The provision requiring it to transact all its business through state offices is sound and should be retained.

This separation of functions should work satisfactorily in normal times; in times of stress, however, conflicts are likely to arise, in which a subdivision, becoming incalcitrant, will use its administrative power to oppose the will of the national party majority. The N. E. C., being responsible for carrying out this will, must in the last analysis be able to enforce compliance with its rulings by all inferior bodies. It has power to grant charters to state organizations which meet the necessary conditions; it should, therefore, have the power to revoke the charters of states which cease to meet these conditions. A state which deliberately and systematically acts contrary to the party constitution, a decision of a convention, or a ruling of the N. E. C., or which permits one of its subdivisions so to act, is not meeting the conditions upon which its charter was granted, and its charter is liable to revocation. Now, the revocation of a charter is a very serious business, to be called into play only on the gravest provocation, and even then only after adequate warning, (except where an emergency arises which can brook no delay). However, it seems a justifiable construction that the power to apply a great penalty implies that to apply lesser penalties. The N. E. C. is, therefore, within its rights in rebuking any state organization which repeatedly violates the national party code, and in warning it that persistence in such violations will result in the revocation of the charter. Since the state will generally claim that the specific actions involved do not violate the party code, the N. E. C. will (until some other body is created for that purpose) have to assume the responsibility of deciding for itself whether certain acts are illegal.

It is obvious that when the N. E. C. serves notice upon a state that certain specific acts are illegal and will if con-

tinued lead to loss of its charter, it is in effect (if not in theory) ordering that state to cease those acts, and therefore it is directly interfering with state administrative autonomy. There is no way to avoid this, unless the national organization, and its representatives the N.E.C., are to be stripped of all authority and reduced to merely advisory capacity. It must depend upon the judgment and good faith of the N. E. C. not to appeal to its ultimate disciplinary powers except where it is abundantly convinced that the acts complained of constitute a deliberate challenge to the authority of the national party, and cannot be dealt with in any other way.

Entirely apart from considerations of states' rights, there is another aspect of the question of discipline, which applies equally to the N. E. C. and to inferior authorities. One frequently hears criticisms beginning "Not even a capitalist court would——". Now, it is an entirely inadequate conception which likens functions of a responsible party committee to those of a government court. A law court is only one of a group of agencies of government, having narrowly defined special functions. Its business is simply and solely to determine whether or not, in any given case which may be brought before it by aggrieved parties or by the separate government agencies which are responsible for seeking out offenses, a body of codified law has been violated. It has no concern with the social effects, or even the justice, of the law or its violation; it need not bother to prepare evidence, to restrain those under accusation of crime (who, though "presumed innocent", are nevertheless kept in jail or under bond until the case is disposed of, not as a punishment but as a necessary precaution), or to execute the sentences which it imposes. It is supposed to be entirely above politics.

The situation of party committees is completely different. In the first place, such committees should not, according to the foregoing analysis, be "above politics"; they should be the leading proponents of the policies which command majority support. In the second place, there is no such differentiation of functions as exists in the government apparatus. That this rolling into one of prosecutor, judge, and jury is far from satisfactory may be admitted at once. In cases where the offending comrades belong to a group opposed to that in control of the committee, it is too much to expect of human nature that there will be general acquiescence in the belief that the committee may be trusted to act objectively and impartially. Actually, it is likely to lean over backwards in the attempt, a result which may work definitely to the advantage of the offenders. It might be worth while to experiment with the creation of a separate grievance committee, before which cases could come on complaint of the parties involved or by action of the N. E. C. This arrangement would free the N. E. C. from a class of work which not only makes intolerable inroads upon its time, but diverts its attention from constructive work and drains away its enthusiasm and confidence.

There remains a third, and much more fundamental, difference between the administration of "justice" by a capitalist court and the rulings of the N. E. C. The latter is not limited by any formal code; it is charged with the guardianship of the welfare of the party. When it becomes aware of a situation which offers, or seems to offer, a serious threat to that welfare, it cannot escape the duty to initiate investigation followed by ap-

propriate action. This action must be conceived, not in terms of handing out justice, but in terms of service to the interests of the party. This is not to state that justice is to be ignored; I cannot imagine a situation in which there would be any conflict between justice and the party's true best interests. The point is rather that mere technical terms such as justice and legality are much too narrow; usually the issue cannot be formulated at all in any such mechanical simplicity. In any case which is important enough to come before the N. E. C., the specific acts concerned will be found to fit into a whole pattern of acts, thoughts, and tendencies, from which they derive their real significance, and which must be investigated and assayed in order to reach any intelligent understanding of the situation and to determine the appropriate method of handling it. For this reason, the N.E.C. (and lower authorities) should not be limited in the same strict way as are law courts, by restrictions on jurisdiction, rules of evidence, etc.

It will be seen that the conception of the powers and duties of the N. E. C. here developed would give that body a high degree of authority and discretion. This authority and discretion they would exercise, not in their own rights, but as responsible representatives of the supreme power, the national party. It is the writer's belief that constitutions and organizational machinery exist for the purpose of getting things done, rather than of preventing them from being done. It is much better to spend time and thought upon the selection of trustworthy, capable officials, and then entrust them with wide powers of rapid and effective action, than to be preoccupied with the constant fear that they will exceed their authority, and erect an encumbering structure of checks and balances to impede their every move. A strong central authority is not inconsistent with democracy, provided, as is true of the N. E. C., it is chosen democratically, and is subject to the control of a party referendum at all times. It must be realized that democracy is on trial to-day throughout the world. Its opponents charge that it has not proved capable of effectively meeting crises or rapidly changing conditions, but has functioned well only under conditions of relative stagnation. We must demonstrate within the party that it is possible to have power sufficiently compact and unified to be capable of effective action in times of flux, while still under democratic control.

A powerful central authority does not enjoy immunity from criticism. But it is necessary to distinguish sharply between legitimate criticism and improper attacks. The essential difference is the good faith of the critic. Every party member is free at all times to express his belief that the N. E. C. is acting unwisely or mistakenly, and no comrade should accept election to that office unless he is willing to undergo constant criticism, examining it for possible valuable ideas, and replying to it by explaining his own acts as in harmony with the general party line which he has been entrusted with carrying forward. As evidence of lack of good faith on the part of the critic, we may take arguments based on distorted statements of the facts, deliberate misquotations or quotations out of context, disingenuous appeals, and personally abusive remarks. Those who use such tactics act definitely against the welfare of the party by bringing it into disrepute, and the N. E. C. has the responsibility to stop such hitting below the belt, by discipline if necessary.

War Policies, Sanctions, and Socialism

Herbert Zam

A PACIFIST can have illusions even about a fascist. L. MacNeill Weir, a Labor member of Parliament and a leader of the pacifist group, on the occasion of Hitler's march into the Rhineland, hailed his subsequent proposals as the "greatest force for peace in recent years." Others saw nothing more significant in the occupation of the Rhine than "Germany occupying its own territory." Such views can only result in a fatal underestimation of the forces driving for war, and criminal failure to prepare the labor movement to fight against war.

The Rhineland is a center of heavy industry. It has enormous steel works and munitions plants. It borders on France, Belgium and Holland; it is essential for the conduct of any considerable war, not only from the standpoint of military strategy, but also as an industrial base for the conduct of a war. Therefore, the military occupation of the Ruhr must be considered as the completion of the first phase of Germany's war preparations—its material preparations. Germany's pace in war preparations has been extremely rapid-rearmament, conscription, air fleet, naval treaty with England, occupation of the Rhine—all these steps can now be clearly seen in their proper niche in Hitler's system.

As if in "answer" to Hitler all the other imperialist powers have begun a well-organized drive for increased armaments on a gigantic scale. But actually this armament race has been on for some time. The Hitler move has become a pretext for the mobilization of the workers of these countries, who hate fascism and its works, behind the armament program of the imperialist governments and behind their war policies. They are trying to mislead the workers who hate war, into support of an imperialist war as in 1914. After all these years of talk of "permanent peace" it is today crystal-clear that the capitalist world is again headed for war. Capitalist "peace" manoeuvers were merely screens behind which war preparations were going on. The pacifists, and not only the pacifists, who placed their hopes for peace upon imperialist instruments and schemes, are once more disappointed.

Roy Howard in an interview upon his return from abroad said that he expected no war for two years, because while everybody is ready to fight, nobody knows whom he will have to fight. Although crudely expressed, this idea is essentially correct. The physical and material preparations for war are about complete. But the political preparations are far from complete. The alignments are not yet definite. Those who glibly predict the next war between the "democratic" nations and the "fascist" nations are influenced more by their desire to justify support for the "democratic" nations than by objective analysis of the situation. The relations between the leading imperialist powers today indicate that there is greater likelihood of a mixed war than of a sharp "democratic-fascist" cleavage. France and Italy are

much closer in policy than France and England. England and Germany have much more in common than Germany and Italy.

The leaders in the war preparations in the last few years have of course been Japan, Italy and Germany. Japan's seizure of Manchuria and Northern China is already history. Italy's invasion of Ethiopia must be recorded as a success. And Hitler, without having added any new territory to Germany, has nevertheless restored its military power. Have these successes been achieved against the resistance of the "democratic" nations? It is only by answering this question that we can obtain a clear picture of how the imperialist world operates.

Japan's seizure of Manchuria met with no resistance from the other imperialist powers in China. Only after it had firmly established its rule did a League of Nations commission mildly censure Japan "for the record". The Japanese occupation of Shanghai on the other hand aroused such a storm that Japan was compelled to abandon all attempts at gaining a foothold in central China. In Shanghai, Japan was treading on the toes of England and the United States. But in Manchuria these powers had only minor interests. It was against the Soviet Union that Japan's main blow was aimed. Whatever tendency England may have had to resist Japan's plans was further frustrated by France's open support of the Japanese adventure. France, whose interests were largely in South China, had for many years sought to break up the Anglo-Japanese alliance which gave Britain hegemony in the Pacific and Far East. "Democratic" France was not at all averse to seeing the triumph of "reactionary" Japan over a weaker nation, if it enhanced at the same time France's imperialist position.

Italy did not find such easy going in its efforts to emulate Japan in Ethiopia. Under the drive of England, the League of Nations voted sanctions against Italy and Mussolini for a while became a diplomatic outcast. The voting of sanctions by the League of Nations aroused the greatest illusions in the international labor movement since Wilson's "war for democracy." Pacifists, communists and tories hailed sanctions as a means of protecting the small nations against aggression; as obstacles to war; as guardians of democracy against fascism. These illusions suffered a severe shock when the sanctions failed to "paralyze" Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. But they received a death blow when the main proponent of sanctions against Italy became the chief opponent of sanctions against Germany for its treaty violations in occupying the Rhineland. The attempt to present sanctions as a "humanitarian" or "anti-war" policy thus received a fatal blow and sanctions appeared clearly in their true garb as an instrument of imperialist policy.

The attitude of England in these two cases arises not from any modification of its moral views, but solely from the different imperialist interests involved. The Mediterranean, with both entrances, Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, in British hands, is essential to British imperial communications. Already Italy is in a position to challenge British control because of its geographic position and its powerful air fleet. With Ethiopia in its hands Italy would hold a trump card. It would be in a position to paralyze British activities in the Red Sea; it would disrupt British plans for the Lake Tana region and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan; it would even be a constant threat to the Suez Canal. British im-

perialist interests therefore dictated that Italy be kept out of Ethiopia. But not because of love for the Ethiopians. British strategy is to throw a military chain in the Mediterranean around Italy, to swing Greece to England's side, and more recently, to rearm Turkey's Aegean territory.

An entirely different policy was followed toward Germany. From the moment Hitler announced his intention to rearm, England has done everything to make his path easier. Ramsay MacDonald, then premier, was the first to put the stamp of approval upon Hitler's plans. Now England, taking advantage of its strong position in the League, prevents any action against Hitler for his occupation of the Rhineland. Obviously this is not mere coincidence. It represents British traditional policy of preserving its own hegemony by balancing one rival against another, and not permitting anyone to become too strong. When French fear of Germany was re-awakened by Hitler's ascent to power every move by France to strengthen itself against Germany (and incidentally, of course, against England) was countered by a British move on behalf of Germany. It is no accident that the Anglo-German naval treaty followed upon the heels of the Franco-Soviet pact, or that the ratio of 35% for Germany's navy is very close to France's ratio. Hitler's occupation of the Rhine, it is now clear, was carried out with the prior knowledge of England, if not with its active consent, and therefore England has prevented, and will continue to prevent, any punishment of Germany. Again we see how, when their imperialist interests coincide, a "democratic" country (England) can work hand in glove with a fascist country (Germany).

The friendship between France and England, which is all that has kept the League of Nations together up to now, is further strained by their mutually opposed relations with Italy. For the last five years France and Italy have been working very closely together. They signed a pact of mutual assistance about a year ago. Austria is one of the bonds that keeps them together. France supports Italian rule in Austria through the Heimwehr in order to keep Hitler's Nazis out of power. With great reluctance France voted for sanctions against Italy, but managed to stave off all sanctions. Since the Rhineland incident, France and Italy have drawn even closer together. Sanctions are dead and Italy's campaign is assured of success.

The "democratic" nations, far from placing obstacles in the path of the fascist war-mongers, have, if their own imperialist interests demanded it, even made that path easier. The final line-up in a war may not be the one present developments seem to indicate, but these developments do show that the alignments will not be based on the internal political system, but on the inter-relationship of imperialist interests. The next war, like the last, will be a war of conquest, an imperialist war for the redivision of the world among the rival imperialist powers. Any illusions that on one side this will be a war for "democracy" (shades of Woodrow Wilson!) for the defense of the small nations (notice how the slogans of 1914 repeat themselves) only means that the working class will be drawn into such a war on the side of one of the imperialist alliances.

It is only in this light that the new capitalist schemes for luring the working class into war can be understood and exposed. The League of Nations has

obviously broken down. Temporarily rehabilitated by its sanctions policy, it is now absolutely impotent before Hitler, impotent to such an extent that France, one of its original protagonists, talks seriously of withdrawing. The League of Nations was never anything more than the instrument of the victorious imperialist powers. It has been ruptured from within by the development of new contradictions among the very victors. Yesterday's allies are tomorrow's enemies. With the League of Nations has gone overboard the myth of "collective security", which was simply a euphonious term for imperialist alliances. But all such alliances inevitably bring forth counter-alliances and eventually develop internal contradictions.

These schemes did serve a purpose. They harnessed a considerable section of the labor movement to the imperialist war schemes. It has by now become clear how fatal was the class collaboration expressed in labor support for imperialist sanctions. Support of sanctions by the labor movement takes the very heart out of the working class anti-war struggle and makes impossible the most important phase of this struggle—the struggle against the capitalist government in the home country. It is easy to understand why pacifists should have become enamored of sanctions. But why revolutionists who were able to see through the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations, who scoffed at the Kellogg Pact and capitalist disarmament should become defenders of sanctions is more difficult to understand. The Soviet Union argument would be legitimate were it not for the fact that the Soviet Union has been in existence since 1917, has been in constant danger of attack by imperialists, has had to repel invasion and blockade and counter-revolution, and has done all that for almost two decades without consummating an alliance betwen the workers and the capitalists of any country for its defence.

The role imperialist France is playing in the Italo-Ethiopian struggle should explain why France desires an alliance with the Soviet Union. France has visions of the splendid Red Army being used to crush its imperialist rival—Germany, and to perpetuate the hold of the French capitalists not only on France, but over a vast colonial empire. Soviet Russia signed the Franco-Soviet pact as a measure of self-defence, even though mistakenly so. France on the other hand sees in the Franco-Soviet pact the means to promote its imperialist ambitions. Herein lies the great danger. The advanced proletariat of Europe will enroll in an imperialist war under the illusion that it is fighting for the Soviet Union. But in the final analysis, as Lenin pointed out in 1917, the advanced proletariat of Europe can help the Soviet Union best by getting rid of its own ruling class. And this task must be carried out particularly during a war, or in the face of war danger.

These questions would not arise if the advanced workers kept in mind that no real proletarian struggle against war is possible without simultaneous struggle against capitalism. This is the essential difference between a utopian-pacifist anti-war movement and a realistic Marxian one. Pacifism divorces war from capitalism, creates the illusion that war can be successfully opposed or abolished within the framework of the capitalist order. But Marxism shows that wars derive from the very organization of bourgeois society, are inevitable outgrowths of capitalism, and can be abolished only

with the abolition of capitalism. The most sensational successes of an anti-war movement, which is not at the same time an anti-capitalist movement, can at the best be superficial and temporary. A proletarian socialist struggle against war may have less sensational or less immediate successes, but they will be basic and lasting.

To separate the struggle against war from the general fight against capitalist society is to deprive the labor movement of one of its most potent anti-capitalist weapons. War is the crowning crime of capitalism. More than any other feature of capitalist society war exposes the inherent rottenness of the entire system. If the inter-relation between capitalism and war can once be brought home to the workers, the struggle against capitalism will be considerably broadened, since the masses are essentially opposed to war. The masses must be made to see that only the socialists are consistent opponents of war; that the socialist claim that war is an outcome of capitalist rivalries is constantly justified by the outbreak of new wars; that capitalist "peace" plans are only covers for new war preparations. War and capitalism can be defeated only if the specific activities against war, while not consisting of abstract socialist propaganda, are based on a consistent Marxian analysis of war and are carried on in the spirit of an uncompromising struggle for a socialist society.

A WORD ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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A Socialist Revolution in Constitutional Garments

by Albert Goldman

THE road from reformism to revolutionary socialism is not at all a straight road. There are many curves and detours. Frequently some socialists stop half way claiming, for some reason or other, that the end has been reached. Felix Cohen, in his article in the American Socialist Quarterly, Volume 4 No. 3, on "Socialism and the Myth of Legality", has succeeded in spinning some theories which will justify many socialists who do not want to proceed further than the half-way point on the road of revolutionary Marxism.

Stripping the article of all superfluous and involved arguments we have the basic proposition that the activities of a revolutionary socialist party, both before, during, and after the conquest of power, should be invested with the legal and constitutional forms that prevail in capitalist society. Just as the capitalists interpret and utilize the constitution and laws to suit their own interests, so must a revolutionary party take the same constitution and the same legal order and exploit them for the purpose 1) of preparing the workers for the revolution, 2) for actually making the socialist revolution, and 3) for introducing socialism.

Stated thus the thesis is open to very serious objection from the point of view of the Marxist theories of the capitalist state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. But taken together with the arguments and the practical lessons derived by Comrade Cohen from his whole analysis, it is justifiable to draw the conclusion that we are dealing here with a tendency not far removed from reformism.

Theory and Practice Must Be Consistent

Marxism abhors inconsistency between theory and practice. One cannot accept a certain theory of the state without seriously attempting to make his activities dependent upon, and consistent, with that theory. It is possible of course for a party to formulate correctly, in its program, the nature of the state and blithely continue in a reformist path. This is true of all centrist parties, but not true of a revolutionary socialist party drawing necessary conclusions from its theoretical formulations.

Comrade Cohen does not discuss the nature of the capitalist state, either because he rejects the Marxian concept of the state or because he does not see that it is in any way connected with the problems he discusses and the proposals he puts forth for the acceptance of a revolutionary party. Now it should not be necessary to prove that the problems involved in a discussion on the nature of our legal and constitutional order, and the necessity and manner of utilizing that order by a revolutionary party—that such problems are intimately connected with the Marxian concept of the state and cannot be solved without reference to that concept.

It is elementary Marxism that the constitutional and legal order has a class basis, and Cohen would be the last one to deny that. It is so closely bound up with the state apparatus that to assert that socialism can be introduced through the utilization of the present legal and constitutional order is tantamount to stating that socialism can be introduced through the present capitalist state machinery. And in spite of the use of the term "revolutionary" we are back to the fundamental idea of reformism. It is just because he has forgotten to take into consideration the "minor" problem of the nature of the state that led Cohen so far astray from revolutionary Marxism.

In accusing the "revolutionary romanticists" of holding the "view that the law is an instrument of class oppression which must be strenuously attacked by any means that may be available" Cohen seems to infer that there is danger that a revolutionary party might come out with the idea of violating all the laws on the statute books. He evidently confuses what the program of a revolutionary party states with reference to the nature of the capitalist state with what it does not say about the laws of that state. A Marxist party in its program will, and must, insist that as a whole the legal system of any capitalist state will protect the capitalist order. But such a party will under no circumstances advance the idea of fighting all the laws on the books. Will a revolutionary party advocate a struggle *against* a six hour day or an unemployment insurance act?

Nor will a revolutionary party call upon the masses to disregard those elements in the constitution which provide for all the bourgeois freedoms. It will insist that the working class struggle against any violation of the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, press, etc. A realistic revolutionary approach to the whole problem makes necessary two things: 1) the correct formulation of the nature of the state and the legal order, in the program of the party; 2) the correct approach to the masses in their immediate struggles; the best method of training and organizing the workers to accomplish their historic task of overthrowing capitalist society.

Shall We Destroy or Nurture Illusions?

In dealing with the problem of our approach to the American workers and the manner in which we should use or avoid using the legal and constitutional order to achieve our objective it will simplify matters if we discuss that problem as it confronts us before, and as we shall be faced with it during and after, the socialist revolution.

We shall readily admit the contention that the masses have many and great illusions about the constitution, the courts, the church etc., etc. That fact impresses Cohen so powerfully that he sees no possibility of a successful elimination of those illusions and hence jumps to the conclusion, with reference to the illusions of the masses in the constitutional and legal order, that we can bring socialism into existence through those illusions and not by destroying them.

That Cohen exaggerates the actual strength of the legal and constitutional illusions of the American workers is clear to anyone who has been active in strike struggles. When native American workers destroy thousands of dollars worth of property while on strike it is difficult to take anyone seriously who, like Cohen, contends that opposition to the legal and constitutional

order by a revolutionary party will convict that party in the eyes of the masses of keeping company with robbers and murderers. But let us assume for a moment that Cohen's sweeping generalizations about the faith and respect which the masses have towards the legal order are true. Then, says Cohen, it follows that *"a revolutionary party must show proper respect to the law."* (Cohen's emphasis) Then says a revolutionary socialist: "the task of destroying that faith and respect will be more difficult but it must be done nevertheless."

The capitalist class does everything possible to strengthen illusions amongst the workers; a revolutionary party must do everything possible to destroy those illusions and to educate an ever greater number to a correct understanding of the nature of capitalist society. That a revolutionary party must be exceedingly careful, in all the various stages of the struggle, not to antagonize the workers by an ill-timed and tactless attack upon what is precious to them goes without saying. It is necessary and correct to state the character of the state and the legal order in a program or in theoretical literature. It would be the height of folly to begin a struggle against the legal and constitutional order in the midst of a strike for higher wages. Just as it would be an act of insanity to attack the religious prejudices of workers during the course of a struggle for a shorter day. Nevertheless it is necessary to attempt to destroy the religious prejudices of a great number of workers especially those who become members of the revolutionary party.

If we accept Cohen's theory that we must use the myth of legality to further the interests of socialism because the workers have faith in the legal order why can we not use the myth of religion to struggle for socialism? Surely the workers have more faith in religion than in the legal order. And since the workers believe in figthing for "their" country when war is declared why not take advantage of that illusion to fight for socialism? The idea that a revolutionary party must cater to the prejudices of the workers destroys the possibility of ever educating the workers out of those prejudices.

Not only must we be careful how we attack the prejudices of the masses but we must take advantage of every loophole in the capitalist system, including the legal and constitutional order. To take advantage of an alleged legal right such as section 7-a of the late N. R. A. is the duty of every sensible revolutionist; to create illusions that such a section solves the problem of the right to organize is more than folly; it is treachery when done by one who himself is not a victim of such an illusion. The same principle applies to the constitutional guarantees of free speech, etc. As well as to the revolutionary traditions of the American people.

To be careful about the prejudices of the workers is the duty of every revolutionary Marxist at a time when the masses are involved in struggle. It requires tact and fine judgment in order to rid the workers of many illusions without arousing their resentment. But that is altogether different from surrendering to those prejudices or attempting to base revolutionary activities on the strength of those prejudices. A proper use of American revolutionary traditions and correct approach to the problem of utilizing rights contained in statutes and in the constitution is one thing. It is quite another thing to state that "the law is at the same time a sys-

tem of popular ideals, towards which a revolutionary party must show proper respect." Therein is represented the difference between revolutionary socialism and modified reformism.

The Revolution Has Its Own Legality

If, before the workers are awakened to the need of a revolutionary seizure of power, a revolutionary party must be careful not to step too roughly upon the prejudices of the working class, that necessity will largely disappear at a time when the revolution is on the order of the day. For the simple reeason that by that time the prejudices of the masses will have largely been destroyed. The loyalty of the workers to, and their faith in, the capitalist legal and constitutional order is an indication of their backwardness and as they become more and more politically developed they see more clearly the exact nature of capitalist society, its falsehoods and hypocrisies.

And the workers do not become politically developed simply by reading the books and pamphlets of a revolutionary party. That development is a result of their own bitter experiences plus the political generalizations which a revolutionary party draws for them from these experiences. That means that a revolutionary party must have the closest contacts with the working class. A revolutionary party shows its skill and Marxist understanding first by choosing such demands as are consistent with the needs and consciousness of the masses, second by struggling with and for the workers and third by teaching the workers, during and after the struggles, fundamental revolutionary principles. As the struggle becomes sharper, as the workers become more class conscious, as the needs of the moment coincide with the full revolutionary program of the party, ever sharper slogans are put forth until the question of power ceases to be a mere propaganda slogan and becomes a slogan of action.

The closer the working class is faced with the problems of taking power the less attention does a revolutionary party pay to parliamentary and legalistic formulas and the more it concentrates on the question of creating necessary organs for the purpose of struggle. A study of the policies of the Bolshevik party under Lenin and Trotsky just prior to the November Revolution in Russia will furnish to every Marxist the general pattern of activities in a period immediately preceding the proletarian revolution.

In this connection it can be said that Cohen's attempt, by quotations from Trotsky's ***History of the Russian Revolution,*** to prove the necessity of covering up the actual revolution with legalistic formulas, is indeed remarkable in its complete failure to understand differences and make distinctions. It certainly should not require a trained legal mind to see that Trotsky speaks about a legality that has nothing at all to do with the legality of bourgeois constitutions and laws.

In the preparation for the overthrow, Trotsky was anxious to use the organs of the Soviets and not the organs of the Bolshevik party. Because the Soviets, as far as the masses were concerned, had more legal standing than the party. But Cohen misses the point entirely by failing to see that the Soviets were organs of the masses themselves and did not represent all of the people and were not at that time the *legal* government. The Kerensky government was still in existence and theoretically it was the only government that had any right to issue

any decrees. Trotsky did not insist that the workers follow the legal order of the bourgeois government but the legal order of their own institutions, the Soviets. Had Trotsky insisted upon the necessity of covering up the revolution with the legality of the Kerensky government then he would not have been a revolutionary Marxist and Cohen would be correct.

And here we strike the whole gist of the matter. As the struggle becomes more revolutionary in character the working masses forget about the legality of the capitalist state to which they cling so tenaciously in ordinary periods. New institutions are created which have a legal standing of their own and the working masses look to these new institutions for law and order. Contrary to Cohen's assertion it is not "perfectly possible for a revolutionary party to proclaim loyalty to the idea of law and order" until that law and order is to be enforced by organs of the working class.

And After the Revolution

"It would be instructive to consider what transformation a socialist Supreme Court could work in American law by utilizing the tactics of capitalist judges." Thus muses Cohen. And how will we get that sum total of all virtues, a socialist Supreme Court? Cohen does not deal with that problem. We may surmise, however, that a socialist Supreme Court will sit at the Capital either by virtue of the fact that a socialist President as well as a socialist Senate will be elected or because the workers, by revolutionary means, will place the socialists in power. If by the first method then what is the difference between Cohen and those intransigeant right wingers who insist that the workers can gain power only by the counting of noses?

And if, led by a revolutionary socialist party, the workers will gain power by revolutionary means, is there anyone so naive as to assume that it would be necessary to retain all of the capitalist governmental institutions, including the Supreme Court and its right to declare laws unconstitutional? A revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system means the destruction of the whole bureaucratic capitalist apparatus and the substitution of a working class state with appropriate organs for such a state. A new constitution would be promulgated consistent with the needs of the new order. "The tools of capitalist democracy are sharp enough," contends Cohen, forgetting that different tools are generally necessary to accomplish different purposes.

Socialism and Doctrine of States' Rights

With a keen eye on the State of Wisconsin and the possibility that "socialism" will be ushered in first in that state Cohen entertains us with a vision of the Federal government interfering with the advanced states where socialism has conquered. In such a situation the Socialist Party should take the place of the southern slave owners and raise the slogan of states' rights. What a failure to understand the dynamics of the class struggle!

It is impossible of course to predict the exact course that a Socialist revolution will take in this country. It is safe to say that a revolutionary party will not attempt to expropriate the capitalists of one state, that is to inaugurate the social revolution, except as the beginning of a general revolutionary movement throughout the country. The working

class, obtaining control in the most industrial sections of the country will be compelled, in order to assure its rule, to extend the revolution to every state in the union (and in the last analysis throughout the whole world). If the reactionary slogan of states' rights will be raised at all it will be raised by the counter-revolutionaries and not by us.

The Stalinist theory of socialism in one country (and in no other country) fades into insignificance before Cohen's theory of socialism in one state.

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At the heart of Cohen's argument lies the fallacious assumption that because the capitalist ruling class uses the fiction of legality to protect its interests the working class can do likewise. It does not follow at all that because a ruling class can use the established constitution and legal order which exist primarily for the purpose of guarding the property of that class, an oppressed class can use the same constitution and legal order to break its chains. There is no logic in such a proposition and certainly, viewing the class struggle in its realities, there is no merit to the idea whatsoever.

The title of the article, "Socialism and the Myth of Legality" suggests a connection with the theory of myths which Georges Sorel, the theoretician of French syndicalism, so ingeniously propounded. But to Sorel the "myths" of the general strike and the catastrophic revolution were powerful forces driving the proletariat to self-sacrificing action. He would hardly consent to having the myth of revolution covered with an additional myth of legality. Possibly mythical constitutional lawyers will complete the picture. At any rate the only one of the three that will not be mythical is the revolution.

This article is in reply to the article on "Socialism and the Myth of Legality" by Felix Cohen which appeared in the American Socialist Quarterly, Vol. 4. No. 3., November, 1935.

WANTED

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AMERICAN SOCIALIST QUARTERLY

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Another View of the A. S. U.

Joseph P. Lash

HAROLD DRAPER'S article, (ASM, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1936) "The American Student Union Faces the Anti-War Strike" contends that the Young Communist League attempting to impose the strategy of the People's Front upon the student movement, is sapping the militancy of the ASU by catering to the liberals. Draper cites three cases in point:

1. That the Y.C.L. has sabotaged ASU cooperation with labor;
2. that the Y.C.L. was opposed to including the Oxford Pledge in the ASU program because it would antagonize the liberals, and once it was in has kept it on paper;
3. that although the Y.C.L. officially backs the slogan of no-substitute-for-the-strike, it *is* accepting mobilization, etc., in order not to antagonize the liberals.

Before refuting these assertions one statement should be made—Draper's attitude toward the liberals in the ASU completely contradicts the position of the Young Peoples Socialist League that liberals can be sincere and honest allies in the struggle for such elementary needs as academic freedom, student relief, and peace. Socialists do believe that this struggle must and will mature into the struggle for socialism, but this would be delayed (if not prevented) if Draper's attitude toward non-socialist students in the ASU were to become general.

With respect to the specific assertions:

1. Cooperation with labor—the ASU at Columbia tied up the campus in the recent elevator strike and brought unwilling service employees out on the picket line. The whole national staff of the ASU was arrested during a mass picketing in this strike outside of its building. The Dartmouth ASU has done splendid work in the Vermont quarry strike. Busloads of Chicago ASU'ers have gone up to Milwaukee to picket alongside of the American Newspaper Guild. In Akron the ASU assisted in the Goodyear strike. In all these instances YCL members of the ASU did yeomen work.

2. The Oxford Pledge—the article starts out by quoting statements showing that the basic position of the YCL on war is determined by the slogan "Defend the Soviet Union" which to the extent that it means supporting a U.S. military alliance with the U.S.S.R. against Japan is incompatible with the Oxford Pledge. This has produced confusion and hesitancy in YCL ranks on the Oxford Pledge. But if YCL reservations on the pledge arise out of its position on the Soviet Union, then its reservations do not necessarily, and in fact are not caused by a desire to cater to the liberals, which is the point Draper is trying to prove.

The article states that the YCL tried to keep the Oxford Pledge out of the program of the American Youth Congress. They did so because it would narrow the base of the Congress. This is also the present position of the YPSL, which is against the Congress's carrying on any activity that might narrow the support for the American Youth Act. The article also states that the

Y. C. L. proposed to drop the Oxford Pledge from the high school program of the ASU. This proposal was originally made by socialists and has the support of many leading Yipsels. Draper's disagreement with them does not make them YCL'ers. And certainly it does not prove that the YCL is sapping the militancy of the ASU.

3. The anti-war strike—Draper declares that the first strike call which declared unequivocally for the Oxford Pledge was dropped upon objections from liberals and another drawn up. Draper neglects to state that he approved of the second strike call's formulation of the Oxford Pledge and voted for the call as a whole. That this call was revised upon receipt of protests from all sides—socialists, communists and liberals. Draper further states that the YCL proposal that the strike call in the high schools be a "peace action" call with the strike as a preferred form of peace action is another evidence of YCL right opportunism. The justification of the peace action call has a good deal of validity, even though everyone, including YCL'ers, concedes the dangers to which it may lay us open.

The ASU is weak in the high schools. Past experience with the SLID and NSL has shown that a weak high school chapter cannot build itself by the anti-war strike—that on the contrary, by calling a strike a weak chapter isolates itself from the student body and exposes to expulsion the most militant students in that chapter. It was felt that a precondition of a strike in the high schools had to be a strong ASU, and that the way to get a strong ASU was to call for peace actions which would strengthen our position in relation to the student body and the administration, pave the way for recognition, and keep our militants from being expelled.

The proponents of the peace action call recognized the danger of setting the precedent of non-strike in the high schools, and therefore, proposed that a strike be listed as the preferable form of peace action, since it unlike any other form of anti-war demonstration was a dress rehearsal for what we would do in a war crisis.

The YPSL position was that the call should be for a strike with assemblies, etc., listed as permissible alternatives. Now regardless of which position one considers correct, there is sufficient argument here in terms of the strategy of building a militant student movement, not to consign the advocates of peace actions to the limbo of counter-revolution.

A few general remarks are in order. There is a dangerous tendency in some quarters to ignore the general needs of the student body and emphasize our differences with the YCL. Some of us seem to regard the ASU primarily as an enlarged forum for this purpose. The basis of a campaign against YCL theoretical errors becomes not the healthy one of hammering out a common approach, but of scoring debating points and winning the other fellow's following. If such becomes our primary purpose in the ASU, this splendid coalition of socialists, communists and liberals, which has swept the campus by storm, will soon be rent asunder. One must believe that the program of the ASU will lead to actions that will dictate a common approach and solution to all the elements in the ASU.

That is Draper's fundamental error. He thinks constantly in terms of inevitable polarization and rupture. It seems to me that a much healthier approach to the student movement is that which

most socialists accept; this is *not* that there will be inevitable polarization amongst students, but that the majority of students can be united around a program of immediate demands which they believe can be obtained under capitalism, but which socialists assert will involve them in the struggle against capitalism and for socialism. Draper's main concern is to shun allies who may later desert us; my main concern is to set students in motion to the point where they must make the decision between capitalism and socialism.

YPSL Position

Ben Fischer

The ASM has asked Ben Fischer, national secretary of the YPSL, to prepare a statement on this discussion presenting the official position of the League. His statement follows:

"The YPSL has not as yet taken a definite position on the issue involved. However, the discussion at the April meeting of our N. E. C. in Detroit makes it possible to express a point of view with which a majority of the members of the N. E. C. will agree. Later, an official statement on student anti-war work will be issued on the basis of our analysis of the student strike and general student anti-war work throughout the country.

"Two things which Comrade Lash puts forth are fundamentally incorrect and it is these two matters which are the real issues at stake. The first thing is the concept that YPSL criticism of the YCL has as its purpose the hammering out of a common approach. This is entirely incorrect. Criticism can lead to a common approach to the degree that it can clear up confusion and convince the YCL of our position. But the differences between the YCL and YPSL today are of a basic nature and the YPSL cannot and will not submerge these differences or soft-pedal them in the interests of a "common approach". We stand for common action on common issues on which we can agree, such as the American Youth Act, the Herndon defense, etc. We should like to see a common approach but this is possible only by a change in the YCL line of support of imperialist war and the confusion of the class struggle through the tactic of People's Front and the Front of the Younger Generation.

"The other thing is Comrade Lash's belief that the struggle of students for their immediate demands leads to the development of revolutionary crystallization among these students. This is false. The student body is not a class. When the working class is set in motion it tends to move against the capitalist class and closer to the revolutionary movement. But the student body is a mixed class body whose militancy can lead just as well to conservatism or reaction as to socialist development. The independent work of the socialist forces as well as objective conditions will determine in the main in which direction the student goes. This means that the socialist position must constantly be put forth clearly and in distinct terms and this means that we can logically expect the student movement to become an integral part of the revolutionary movement only in so far as the influence of the revolutionary forces is extended in the student movement.

"Therefore, it is wrong to take the

view that merely building the American Student Union and cooperating with it is sufficient. The central task is the organization of students into the YPSL and extension of the influence of the YPSL, organizationally and ideologically, among the students. The work of the YPSL among students who are struggling for immediate demands is decisive because without this work we cannot reasonably expect the ASU to be a source of recruits and strength for the revolutionary movement."

Book Reviews

STEEL-DICTATOR

by Harvey O'Connor, John Day, N. Y. $3.00

In *Steel-Dictator* Harvey O'Connor summarizes and coordinates much of what has previously been written on the steel industry, and especially on the United States Steel Corporation. He also brings the material up to date. In this performance alone he has rendered an inestimable service to students on the subject. He does much more. He chronicles, for the first time in book form, the hopes and defeats experienced since 1933 by the half million men who produce steel. At the same time he graphically calls attention to the decadence of "The Corporation" incident to over-expansion and too close domination by banking interests.

At the conclusion of the Homestead Steel Strike in 1892 H. C. Frick cabled Andrew Carnegie, then in Scotland:

> "Strike officially called off yesterday. Our victory is now complete and most gratifying. Do not think we will ever have any serious labor trouble again. . . . We had to teach our employees a lesson and we have taught them one they will never forget."

Judge Gary taught more than 300,000 workers a similar lesson in the course of the 1919 steel strike. But in 1933 the Frick and Gary lessons of terror were forgotten. Steel workers flocked to join the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers much to the surprise and bewilderment of that union's aged president, Michael F. Tighe. Before he got over his bewilderment the Iron and Steel Institute, aided by the Federal Government, handed the workers a lemon in place of collective bargaining. The gift was a mediation board without power to enforce its decisions. The result was discouragement and eventual break-up of the union.

The story has been told in scattered bits in a hundred different newspapers and periodicals. It gains much in effect and reality when presented by Mr. O'Connor in its totality. Mr. O'Connor's description of Duquesne, a typical steel town, is a classic. He has caught its every nuance. There is in Duquesne pain, filth, and squalor, hope both crushed and showing its head again, defeat and revolt, and finally approaching death to the very forces which for years flourished on the misery of the defeated.

The Steel Corporation, according to Mr. O'Connor's analysis, is doomed. The surplus running up to more than three-quarters of a billion dollars which Judge Gary threw back into the Corporation between 1901 and 1927 has given rise to a Frankenstein. The Corporation is too large to adapt itself to changing conditions and to changing markets. With production at a fraction of capacity the Corporation's capital base is too heavy to be carried by the old system of high prices and low wages,

and the bankers who direct its policies from 71 Broadway and 23 Wall Street are being outwitted by young upstarts in the industry like E. T. Weir who is a good chiseler and knows steel. The Corporation's leaders know all about finance but very little about the metal which has supported them handsomely for 3½ decades.

The U. S. Steel Corporation is the most colossal experiment in corporation finance. It is also one of capitalism's most colossal wastes. Mr. O'Connor summarizes this conclusion as follows:

> "The Steel Corporation has become a racket for the nourishment of bankers, brokers, gamblers, lawyers and executives. It is no longer able to furnish work or wages sufficient to keep its employees off the relief rolls. The conclusion is plain that private ownership of the Corporation has outlived any usefulness which the classical economists once postulated. In exacting their pound of flesh, the financiers are dooming the Corporation, as a social enterprise, to decay. From their policies come black poverty, intensified by the red flash of war". ROSE M. STEIN.

WORLD POLITICS AT A GLANCE

(Political Handbook of the World 1936; edited by Walter H. Mallory. Published by Harper & Bros. for the Council on Foreign-Relations, Inc. New York, 1936. $2.50.)

Any one who wants to follow the rapidly changing international situation will find "Political Handbook of the World" an invaluable aid. It covers every country. It gives the necessary information about governments, composition of parliaments, and party relations. Each party is briefly described as to social base, program, leadership and influence. A separate list supplies the names, place of publication and politics of the most important newspapers and periodicals.

For some of the countries, unfortunately, the information is extremely meager or incomplete. Cuba is an example of the first. The Socialist Party, an increasing force in India is not mentioned. Not a hint is given as to the program to the National Revolutionary Party of Mexico or its social base. The Norwegian Labor Party is still listed as "more radical than other labor parties of Western Europe," although this has not been true for many years. The elimination of these shortcomings would greatly enhance the value of the book.

H. Z.

SCOTTSBORO: THE SHAME OF AMERICA

by the Scottsboro Defense Committee, 112 E. 19th St., New York. Pamphlet 32 pages, 5 cents.

Those who do not know the story of the Scottsboro boys can find it clearly and concisely told in this pamphlet. Those who know its main outlines can here refresh their memories and can supply themselves with copies to be handed to those who should know the story and do not. In careful and restrained language, almost in bare outline form, the tale of class and race hatred in the South is unfolded. The very restraint with which the anonymous author of the pamphlet tells his story adds to its effectiveness.

In view of the broad attacks that are now being launched against civil liberties it is important to be reminded of the effectiveness of organized effort to preserve and to extend them. The Scottsboro case stands out as proof that no cause is hopeless. By all precedent these boys would have been dead long ago. Mass labor action has saved them, so far. This pamphlet deserves a wide circulation.

D. P. B.